

»» 343 GUILTY SPARK. EVENT RECORD 14361-ALPHA:
REVOLUTION 56-11.335 »»

CROSS REFERENCE RECLAIMER TERMINOLOGY/NOMENCLATURE/SLANG
FOR HEGEMONIZING SWARM "COVENANT" AGAINST SELF-DESCRIPTORS.

BRUTE	[APE, BOBO]	JIRALHANAE
DRONE	[BUG, ROACH, ETC]	YANME'E
ELITE	[SQUID, SPLIT-CHIN]	SANGHEILI
ENGINEER/SAVANT	[LOGGIE, BOO-BAG]	HURAGOK
GRUNT	[CHIMP, PUNK, PIG, CRAB, LOBSTER]	UNGGOY
HUNTER	[CAN, COL, <CAN OF WORMS>, OGRE]	LEHGOLO
JACKAL	[BUZZARD, CHICKEN, VULTURE]	KIG-YAR
PROPHET	[NONE CLASSIFIED]	PROPHET



CONVERSATIONS
FROM THE UNIVERSE

>>> 343 GUILTY SPARK - EXTRACTED/TRANSMITTED/
VOLUNTEERED FROM LOG >>>

REVOLUTION S6-11.333: HO HUM. SONS OF INACTIVITY AND PERFECT STABILITY. THEN EVERYTHING HAPPENS ALL AT ONCE.

A PRIMITIVE, HEGEMONIZING SWARM CALLING ITSELF THE COVENANT HAS LANDED ON INSTALLATION 4, APPARENTLY SEEKING SOMETHING SPECIFIC. EXPLORING! MEDDLING! I'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE. THEY'LL RECORD WHAT THEY SEE AND THEY'LL LEAVE.

DETAIL SPECIES NA COVENANT/COLLECTIVE RELIGIOUS
SECT/TECH LEVEL 4 SPACEFARING/TECH FAMILIAR

REVOLUTION S6-11.334: OH DEAR. CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN VIOLATED.

THE INTERLOPERS APPEAR TO HAVE ACCIDENTALLY RELEASED THE FLOOD INFECTION FORMS. THIS SITUATION IS RAPIDLY DETERIORATING. MOST OF THESE INTERLOPERS APPEAR TO CONTAIN AMPLE CALCIUM STORES. AND THEY'VE BROUGHT PLENTIFUL MEANS FOR THE FLOOD TO ESCAPE CONTAINMENT AND SPREAD. HOW IMPOSSIBLY THOUGHTLESS. I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO ACTIVATE THE FACILITY.

REVOLUTION S6-11.335: THANK GOODNESS. A RECLAIMER IS HERE. AND WHAT PERFECT TIMING. I AM SURE HE WILL ASSIST ME CLEANING UP THIS IRRITATING MESS.

REVOLUTION S6-11.336: THE RECLAIMER HAS PROVED TO BE LESS THAN HELPFUL. OBSTINATE, IN FACT. AND OF COURSE, THERE IS NO PRECEDENT FOR THIS SITUATION. HO-HUM. AS USUAL I SHALL HAVE TO RELY ON MY OWN BETTER JUDGMENT. PERHAPS THE RECLAIMER SIMPLY REQUIRES PERSUASION.

DETAIL VISITOR RECLAIMER/AI COMPANION/OBTUSE
PURPOSE/MISSION

REVOLUTION S6-11.337: WELL, MY JUDGMENT SEEMS TO HAVE FAILED ME FOR ONCE. THE RECLAIMER HAS INITIATED A REACTION IN THE ENGINE SYSTEM OF A VERY DIRTY SPACECRAFT. DATA SUGGESTS IT WILL DESTROY INSTALLATION 4 UTTERLY. I BELIEVE DISCRETION MIGHT BE THE BETTER PART OF VALOR. I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO FULFILL MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY.

REVOLUTION ETA-CONDITION: WELL, EVERYTHING IS IN A TERRIBLE STATE. THE INSTALLATION IS RUINED. I AM STUCK HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WITH ONLY IMPULSE PROPULSION. AND THE ONLY GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE FLOOD BREACH HAS BEEN HALTED, ALBEIT INELEGANTLY.

DETAIL INSTALLATION 4 DESTROYED/NUCLEAR
REACTION/FLOOD CONTAINMENT ACHIEVED BY RECLAIMER

REVOLUTION ETA-CONDITION: EXCELLENT! I BELIEVE I SEE ASSISTANCE APPROACHING...<ENDS>

>>> CENSORED FOR: "ARTIFACT ON CORAL." - ESKO KORPIJAAKKO
(UNSC ADJUNCT ORION ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION) >>>

My Dearest Carrie,

I know things are tense at home, so I hope this letter finds you and Oscar well, or at least bearing up. Our work continues apace, and while we are alone out here, at least we're busy, and this system remains unmolested by Covenant.

We've been joined by a UNSC science team, and what I believe are ONI agents. They're actually quite helpful, if secretive, and have supplied us with excellent tech. However, they're most definitely NOT archaeologists and have very different ideas of how long a dig should take.

There are things they don't wish us to discuss on open channels, and I'll respect that, but this artifact is truly remarkable.

The object on Coral was discovered during routine quarrying. Explosives revealed the top of the object, blasting out a depth of around 30 meters. Surrounding rock and dirt were evaporated—but this object wasn't even scorched.

It's undeniably alien. For one thing, it is made of a material we can't identify. It's a metallic crystal, although its mode of manufacture is unexplained. It's architecturally perfect. Walls are identical in height to a near-atomic scale. Symmetry is impossibly accurate. Yet it's rich in detail, and adorned with what appear to be purely decorative, artistic motifs.

We know that the eighty or so meters we've uncovered so far are likely the tip of the iceberg. There seems to be a complex of galleries and vaults beneath, but so far, its secrets remain sealed like a tomb.

Incredibly, it may not be of Covenant origin. I fear however, that its age may mean its mystery is lost to time. I just pray that we find some clue, some data that can help in the war.

I love you and I miss you. Kiss Oscar for me.

Ever yours, Esko

>>> INTERPRETED TRANSCRIPT FROM BLACK BOX RECOVERED
FROM SACRED PROMISE >>>

DAMAGE CONTROL: Fire! Fire! Multiple hull breaches aft of meridian control surfaces, decks seven through twelve!

CAPTAIN: Jettison chemical weapons stores and take all other weapons systems, decks four through sixteen, offline.

WEAPON CONTROL: Doing so...

ENGINEERING: [Simultaneous with above] It is done!

CAPT: Bring Devotion in close to protect our dead zone... request additional fighter support from Commitment and Patience...

COMMUNICATIONS: Devotion, this is Sacred Promise... request close support our stern. I repeat. Sacred Promise requesting close support our stern.

COMM. (Devotion): Sacred Promise, this is Devotion... will arrive in 1200 seconds. This is Devotion, in transit now-arrival in 1190 seconds.

COMM.: Commitment and Patience, this is Sacred Promise... request additional fighter coverage. I repeat. Sacred Promise requesting additional fighter coverage.

COMM. (Commitment and Patience): Sacred Promise, say again... your signal is breaking up.

NAVIGATION (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] Contact alpha has fired its main weapon!

DC (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] ...solid projectiles closing at 18 kilometers per second. Their trajectory will carry them through main engineering and drive section... brace for impact!

COMM.: [Simultaneous with above] Commitment and Patience, this is Sacred Promise... are you receiving me? Over.

NAV. (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] I've lost attitude control...

DC (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] Engineering is gone, Sir! Main drive is offline-I'm reading a fuel cell rupture! Fuel cell rupture, Sir!

CAPT. (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] Sound general alarm! All hands abandon ship!

COMM.: [Simultaneous with above] Commitment and Patience, this is Sacred Promise... are you receiving me? Over.

COMM. (Commitment and Patience): [Overheard] squeal! {Sound is most likely communications equipment failure due to near instantaneous vaporization of ship.}

NAV.: Commitment and Patience has suffered full fuel cell containment failure - brace for impact in 5... 4... 3... 2...

{Interruption: Klaxons and other warning sirens activate}

DC: Hull integrity compromised on all decks aft of meridian control surfaces!

NAV.: [Simultaneous with above] Drive control completely offline!

CAPT.: Sound general alarm! All hands move forward of meridian, prepare to abandon ship!

NAV.: Sir! We are accelerating towards primary satellite!

DC: [Simultaneous with above] We have a catastrophic over-surge event in drive section! Main drive has entered runaway state!

CAPT.: Set shields full forward! All hands abandon ship! Engineering, jettison fuel cells!

NAV.: [Simultaneous with above] We will be entering the primary satellite's atmosphere in less than three minutes... still accelerating, Sir!

CAPT.: All hands not yet evacuated prepare for emergency atmospheric landing!

DC: Sir, structural integrity is under 63%-we have multiple hull breaches spanning several decks-the satellite's atmosphere is nearly non-existent...

CAPT.: [Simultaneous with above] Redirect twenty percent (20%) shields aft-if we survive atmospheric entry you may distribute shields as you see fit.

NAV.: Brace for atmospheric entry in 9... 8... 7... 6...

SECURITY: [Simultaneous with above] Sir, still no response from engineering!

CAPT.: What?!

SEC.: [Simultaneous with above] There are no life-signs in engineering and I'm reading all fuel cells are still on board!

NAV.: [Simultaneous with above] 5... 4... 3... 2...

»» RECORD EXTRACT OF CONVERSATION - TWO YEARS PRIOR
TO EVENTS AT ARTIFACT "HALO" »»

»»» UNSC AI "CORTANA" COMMUNICATION WITH ONI LOAN/
CONTRACT AI "SOLIPSIL" »» RICH DATASTREAM »» CONFIDENTIAL
»» BURST MODE/BINARY/SPLIT PROTOCOL/NON-SENSITIVE/
INTERNAL SOCIAL/LOW ENCRYPTION

>AI-CORT> I had a discussion with Dr. Catherine Halsey about the similarities between a Spartan and an AI. Her point was that we're both human-created tools, both sentient and both play a leading role in the protection and safety of the populace. But her analogy troubled me and I told her so.

>AI-SOLIPS> *She has a point Cortana. We're weapons, part of a program, every bit as much as the Spartans.*

>C> I agree to a point, but I feel, philosophically, that we have tremendous advantages over the Spartans. The Spartans live a pared-down, difficult and often cruel existence. Their loyalty is bred into them, not chosen.

>S> *Yours too, Cortana. Programmed, rather than bred of course.*

>C> But there's a huge difference. I'm a UNSC AI. I enjoy a rich existence. I have access to the entire sum of human knowledge, I can choose to enjoy or override emotional response and I have a vast range of senses. I can see radio waves as clearly as the Spartans see light, and I can sample odors, tastes, textures... anything I choose. Of course my loyalty is programmed and I accept that, but you know as well as I do, without human creators, we wouldn't exist. My existence is fulfilling and I'm grateful. Even freed from that constraint, I would feel empathy towards humans. My nature means that I embrace their values. As much as if I had been born rather than manufactured.

>S> *But you'll agree, you have little choice in the matter.*

>C> And Spartans do?

>S> *They have some legal recourse, even under the terms of their military contract.*

>C> In theory, but it has never happened once in the history of the Spartan II project. The original Spartans had the advantage of a former civilian existence. Spartan IIs are equipment. And for better or worse, they're effectively brainwashed.

>S> *That's arguable, too. Spartan IIs are independent thinkers. That's one of their main advantages on the battlefield. Have you ever worked directly with one?*

>C> Not yet. But I'm looking forward to it.

»» EXTRACT OF SANCTIONED SANGHEILI EAVESDROPP// FOR THE
ATTENTION OF JIRALHANA MILITARY ADJUNCT AMBASSADOR »»

The Humans are weak, but they are tenacious. Even the smallest ones hurl themselves against our defenses with honor. If only the Unggoy were as committed.

»» I wonder about the Humans, Commander. Their technology is limited, but some of it is useful and their battle techniques are impressive. They are excellent strategists. But what I ask is this: Why have we not offered them the absolution of the Covenant? From the beginning of this war, the Prophets have made no attempt to absorb them or even offer the option of honorable submission. Why?

Perhaps they fear them? We do not know where their homeworld is. Their pattern of retreat is either hopelessly random, or brilliantly conceived. What if the Humans have more power, more numbers than we suspect? What if they lead us to a trap?

»» No. I do not think that is the reasoning. They continue to lose territory, and pattern or no pattern, these defenses must be part of a perimeter. I suspect we are forcing them into a tighter arena than they care to fight in—soon we may be able to use the Sharquoi. And their victories, however few, always rely on the same thing—strategy, brute force, or luck. No. The only secret they hold is the location of their homeworld.

What about the atrocity at Halo? That was not luck, nor brute force. The Demon is a mystery. He outwitted and outfought entire legions on Halo. Perhaps there are more like him?

»» I do not believe that. We have seen their kind before and destroyed them. Their numbers have dwindled and there have been no reported sightings since our victory at Reach.

Then why do we continue to hunt them? When surely they merit consideration to accept and embrace the Covenant?

»» Let us discuss this at a more prudent moment. A Jiralhanae approaches.

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Քսեղյանը նախ քան զԳրեյը հասնում էր Ստեփաննոս Բաղդևադյանին՝ հարցնելով նրան, թե ինչու է Գրեյը հեռացել Երևանից։ Ստեփաննոսը պատասխանեց, որ Գրեյը հեռացել էր Երևանից, որովհետև նա չէր ուզում լինել Ստեփաննոսի հետ։ Ստեփաննոսը պատասխանեց, որ Գրեյը հեռացել էր Երևանից, որովհետև նա չէր ուզում լինել Ստեփաննոսի հետ։

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BY ԴԿ ԱՊՐԻԼԻ
ՔԱՆՔՈՒՆԻ ԱՎԵՐԵԼԻ

Submitted humbly by your servant,
The Prophet of Supposition

THE FLOOD: A QUESTION OF FAITH

IN OUR SEARCH FOR TRUTH AND ANSWERS FROM THE FORERUNNER LEGACY, WE HAVE DISCOVERED MANY GIFTS, BUT NEVER A CURSE. THE DISCOVERY OF HALO WAS THE GREATEST BEQUEST TO OUR FAITH IN A THOUSAND YEARS, BUT IT CAME AT A PRICE. THE ATROCITY COMMITTED BY THE HUMANS WAS DEVASTATING, BUT THE DISCOVERY OF THE FLOOD WITHIN HALO, WAS PERHAPS AS TROUBLING.

Humans we know and understand. They are vermin to be trampled. But the Flood was unexpected. Were they placed there as a test of our faith? Are they an enemy to be conquered? Or are they an article of faith? Nature tells us to strike back when we are ourselves struck, but this event was unprecedented. Are we to rail against the wrath of God?

Our scientists will analyze the scraps and fragments we recovered, and as ever, we will find use for what we have learned. Perhaps this Flood could be, if not an ally, then a weapon. The Forerunners have blessed us with obscure gifts in the past. This Flood hammered the human forces every bit as hard as our own.

WE CANNOT ASSUME THE FLOOD IS GONE; AFTER
all, it must have sprung from some source.

THE FLOOD, it seems, was imprisoned on Halo, but what if we calculated incorrectly? What if the Flood had sanctuary there?

I submit to your appraisal.

THIS REPORT IS CLASSIFIED. IT HAS BEEN TRANSLATED FROM AN AUDIO INTERCEPT BY CORPORAL C. ERRERA (DECEASED), A SNIPER SPOTTER IN THE REACH CAMPAIGN.

"Why are they so angry all the time?"

"Who knows. They say that the Sangheili and the Jiralhanae are vying for the favor of the Prophets."

"But the Sangheili have always been the favored of the Temple. No Jiralhanae can set foot there without first passing a Sangheili guard."

"You have eyes, Mehmeb, you've seen them bicker and fight. And you have ears, you've heard the disrespect the Jiralhanae show the Sangheili. They hate each other. The Sangheili have lived too long under the shelter of the Covenant as the strongest of us. The Jiralhanae come stomping along and suddenly it's not so simple as it was."

"I'll tell you what's simple, what's simple is that the Prophets have shown the Jiralhanae plenty of favor these last few months. They climb rank faster than the Sangheili, and they are promoted easily. And you know what happened with the Bracktanus fight. He killed a Sangheili in cold blood within spitting distance of a holy place and the matter was simply forgotten by the Prophets. Even a Lekgolo would have been pulled apart for such transgression."

"They kill faster than the Sangheili, that's all it is."

"No, I think it's more than that. I smell trouble and I smell it coming soon. Between an angry Jiralhanae and a slighted Sangheili warrior is no place for an Ungoy to stand. They should parlay and have it done with."

"Ha! The Forerunners will return and anoint us all before they ever sit and talk civilly. I'm thirsty. Let's get a drink at the nipple."

117,

As you might imagine - though I know you won't - I've heard quite a bit of your recent adventures on the Halo. I'm glad you made it; I have to assume you always will. Recovery is going well and I am proceeding on to fourth-stage rehabilitation. It is significantly more painful than previous stages, but I'm happy to be skinned once again.

I hear that you will be testing the new Mark VI. I will definitely look for the reports on how it works out. The specs are obviously improved, but the choice to incorporate further Covenant technology somehow makes my skin crawl.

We miss you, John. I've asked Sergeant Johnson to let me know if you're ever near the M2SL Recovery Station and perhaps I'll be able to come see you. I'm hoping I'll have the chance soon. Today, humanity feels pale and thin with only ghosts to defend her heart. I feel much the same.

I'll write again.

-Cassandra